

Civil War Episodes

Appomattox

Excerpts from newspapers and other sources

From the files of the
Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection

Times-Union,
Mar. 31/1913

Major Smith Recalls Appomattox And Lincoln's Death

Major Smith, in a circular he has just issued and distributed among the local Grand Army men, dwells upon two April dates of great historic importance. They are the ninth, the anniversary of the surrender of the Confederate forces at Appomattox and the 14th, the anniversary of the death of Lincoln.

The circular reads:

"Within the limits of the month of April, are several historic anniversary days, which appeal especially to those who are striving to perpetuate the deeds of the men who made this nation, and those of a later day, who saved it from disruption. Of widely differing significance, yet inseparably connected with the story of the civil war, are the 9th and 14th days of April, the first the day of the surrender at Appomattox, and the latter the day of darkness and sorrow, which followed so closely upon the rejoicing for the return of peace—the day when Abraham Lincoln, in the midst of his great triumph, with the land which he represented about to enter upon a new era of peace and progress, was felled by the hand of an assassin and passed to the usefulness of the life beyond.

"The story of Appomattox cannot be too often told, for then a page of American history was forever emblazoned in letters of gold, by the magnanimity of the general who had won the victory, a man so lofty in character that he imposed no humiliating conditions upon the vanquished, but then and there laid the cornerstone of what has been a lasting peace and a half century of marvelous progress.

"But the joyousness was soon dispelled by the dark shadow of death, which descended alike upon the north and the south. In the camps of the Union armies a pall of silence rested upon officers and men. Discipline was forgotten, and men gazed into each other's faces in mute horror. Even anger was held in abeyance by part of the land. The south mourned one whom they knew had been a friend, and the grief of the freedmen was pitiable.

"In contemplating the events of those dark days, one is reminded of the parallel in the lives of our saviour and of Abraham Lincoln. Both were men of sorrows and acquainted with grief. Victory came to each but once, and that upon Palm Sunday. Both died by the hands of those they would have befriended, and upon Good Friday. What the earthly life of Christ is to the spiritual life of the world, is very nearly approximated by the influence of the life of Abraham Lincoln upon patriotic thought.

"While the tendency of the present is to hasten the era of universal peace, a condition which all right-minded men and women would heartily welcome and indorse, it is well that on the recurring anniversaries the lesson of the death as well as the life of Abraham Lincoln should be studied and its effect upon the nation considered."

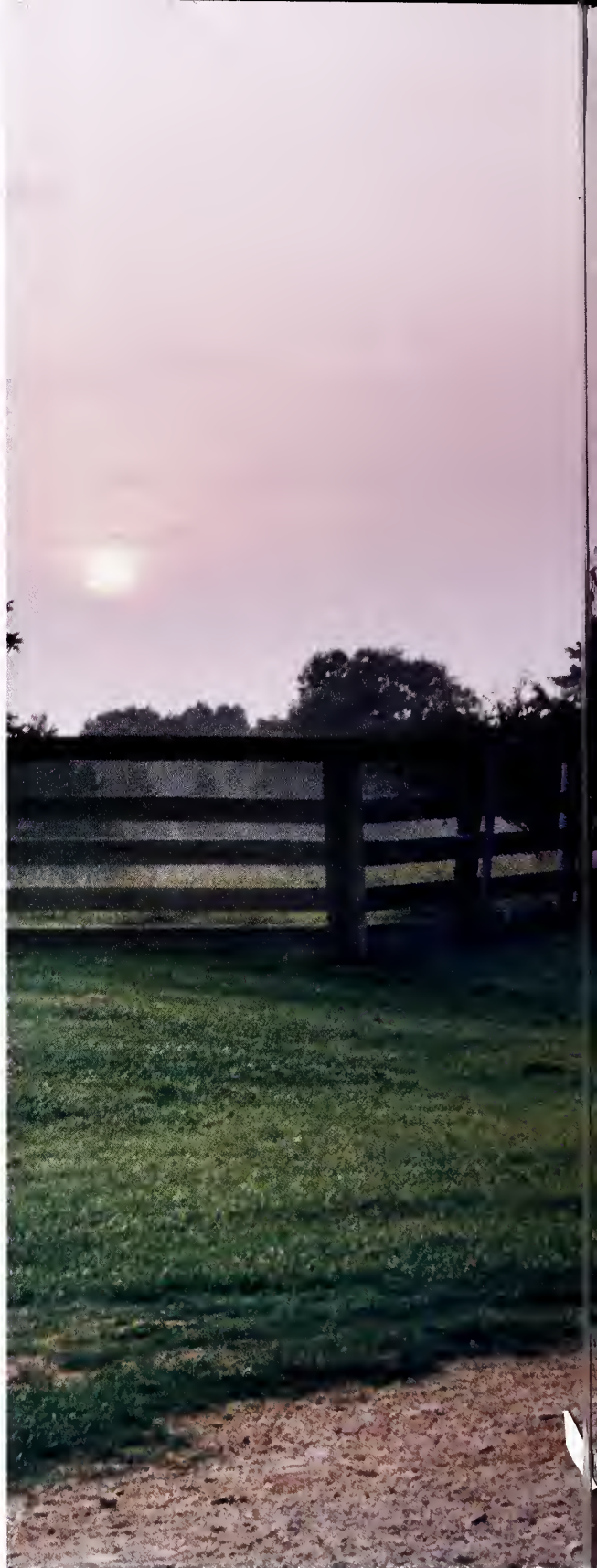


BY WILLIAM ZINSSER

I'm not a Civil War buff. I've never heard the old battlefields like Gettysburg and Chickamauga calling to me to come and walk over them and reenact what happened there; the story is just too sad. When I watched Ken Burns's 10-hour television series, I wondered how Civil War scholars can stand such a relentless diet of carnage and blundering—more than 620,000 men killed in four years—and I periodically switched to a ball game to get a few innings of relief.

But as a larger historical event the Civil War is baggage that I'm stuck with: America's enduring trauma. I continue to lug around its unfinished business, especially the freeing of the slaves, and no presi-

MERCY APPOMATTOX





*The road General
Robert E. Lee took to
Appomattox Court
House to surrender
his army to General
Ulysses S. Grant.*

*When Grant forgave Lee 127 years ago, the healing
began and America was reborn*



PHOTOGRAPHED BY MELISSA CIANO



Clover Hill Tavern, where, by Grant's order, 28,231 parole passes were printed, allowing Confederate soldiers to go home.

dent crowds into my mind as often as Abraham Lincoln. His second inaugural address, delivered only five weeks before his consuming war finally ended and six weeks before he himself was killed, moves me more than any other American document—a continuing astonishment in its wisdom and compassion and in the Biblical grandeur of its language. Of all American writers, Lincoln is the one I most marvel at.

Therefore the Civil War site that kept

William Zinsser is the author of 14 books, including On Writing Well. Appomattox is one of 15 sites he writes about in his new book, American Places.

beckoning to me as I traveled around the country was not one where the armies fought but the one where they stopped fighting. Appomattox was both a longed-for end and a longed-for beginning; America could get on with the business of being a nation. "Before 1861," James M. McPherson writes in his Pulitzer Prize-winning *Battle Cry of Freedom*, "the two words 'United States' were generally rendered as a plural noun: 'the United States are a republic.' The war marked a transition of the United States to a singular noun.... In [Lincoln's] first inaugural address he used the word 'Union' twenty times and the word 'nation' not once.... In his

address at Gettysburg [in 1863] the President did not refer to the 'Union' at all but used the word 'nation' five times to invoke a new birth of freedom and nationalism for the United States. And in his second inaugural address, looking back over the events of the past four years, Lincoln spoke of one side seeking to dissolve the *Union* in 1861 and the other accepting the challenge of war to preserve the *nation*." Appomattox was the birthplace of that nation, and I wanted to see it.

I flew to Richmond and drove west across southern Virginia, choosing that route because it would take me over terrain that General Robert E. Lee cov-

ered with his army in its last week—a week that ended with his surrender to General Ulysses S. Grant, on April 9, 1865, in a tiny village that just happened to be handy when the dream of the Confederacy finally unraveled. Picking up Lee's trail, I saw some historical markers, just beyond the town of Amelia, that told me how desperate his situation had become.

LEE'S RETREAT

SHERIDAN REACHED HERE ON APRIL 4, 1865, WITH THE CAVALRY AND ENTRENCHED. HE WAS THUS SQUARELY ACROSS LEE'S LINE OF RETREAT TO DANVILLE. ON APRIL 5, GRANT AND MEADE ARRIVED FROM THE EAST WITH THE SECOND CORPS AND THE SIXTH CORPS.

For 10 months Lee's 55,000-man Army of Northern Virginia had been dug in near Petersburg. The railroad was its only source of supply. On April 1, General Philip Sheridan had seized the junction of Five Forks, severing the army's lifeline to the railroad. On April 2, Lee ordered his army to retreat, hoping either to turn south to join General Joseph E. Johnston's army in North Carolina or to reach Lynchburg, in the west. Grant, however, was in pursuit:

FROM HERE UNION CAVALRY MOVED NORTH ON APRIL 5, 1865, TO ASCERTAIN LEE'S WHEREABOUTS. ON THE MORNING OF APRIL 6, THE SECOND, FIFTH AND SIXTH CORPS OF GRANT'S ARMY ADVANCED FROM JETERSVILLE TOWARD AMELIA COURT HOUSE TO ATTACK LEE.

By then Lee had already come and gone, finding that the rations he expected in the town of Amelia Court House hadn't arrived and that he couldn't wait for them. With the road to the south blocked by Sheridan,

HE THEN TURNED WESTWARD BY WAY OF AMELIA SPRINGS, HOPING TO REACH THE SOUTHSIDE (NORFOLK & WESTERN) RAILROAD.

Three days later it was all over. On April 6, Union troops cut off and routed almost a fifth of Lee's army at Saylor's Creek, destroyed its supplies, and took 7,000 prisoners. Hearing the news, Lee said, "My God! Has the army been dissolved?" It largely had. Pushed beyond their limit by hunger and exhaustion,



Approximately 6.18 Va.
Apr 9th 1865-

Gen R. E. Lee,
Commanding U.S.A.
Gen.

In accordance with the substance of my letter to you of the 8th inst I propose to receive the surrender of the Army of N. Va. on the following terms:—

Rolls of all the officers and men to be made in duplicate. One copy to be given to an officer designated by me, the other to be retained by such officer or officers as you may designate. The officers to give their individual paroles not to take up arms against the Government of the United States, and each Company or ^{or regimental} commander to sign a like parole for the men of their ~~own~~ commands.

The Arms, Artillery and public

Grant (above, left) outside his tent at Cold Harbor, Virginia, in June 1864, a little less than a year before the surrender. Lee at his Richmond home shortly after the peace was signed. Both pictures were the work of Mathew B. Brady, the most important photographer of the Civil War. Left: The beginning of Grant's note describing the terms of surrender (most of the text is printed on page 95).



huge numbers of soldiers had dropped out, and the army was down to some 30,000 men on April 7, when Lee, hurrying west, received a note from Grant calling on him to surrender.

Heavily outnumbered and almost encircled, Lee considered his dwindling options. One of his officers suggested that the troops could disperse and carry on the Confederate fight as guerrillas. Lee rejected the idea. The guerrillas, he said, "would become mere bands of marauders," hunted down by Union cavalry—an outcome that would bring needless agony to regions of Virginia that had escaped the havoc of war, which the country would take years to recover from. "There is nothing left for me to do but go and see General Grant," Lee said, "and I would rather die a thousand deaths." On April 9 he sent a note to Grant offering to surrender and sent

his aide Lieutenant-Colonel Charles Marshall into the village called Appomattox Court House to find a suitable place for the two men to meet.

Two hours' drive from Richmond, I came to Appomattox, not knowing anything about it except that it was where Lee surrendered to Grant. My schoolboy memory was that they met in a courthouse, but how long they talked and what terms were offered I had no idea. As it turned out when I got there, I was even wrong about the courthouse. In 19th-century southern Virginia, certain towns that served as the county seat had the words "court house" appended to their name. Appomattox Court House was such a town, and thus the image of the two generals conducting their formalities in a courthouse has come down through the years to schoolboys like me.

But in fact when Colonel Marshall rode into town looking for a surrender site it was Palm Sunday and the courthouse was closed. Nor was much else stirring. The village had only about 100 people, half of whom were slaves. One person still in town was a merchant named Wilmer McLean, who, if he didn't already have a sense of irony, undoubtedly developed one that day. McLean was a refugee from northern Virginia, where his home had been used as a Confederate headquarters during the first major battle of the Civil War, near Manassas; a Yankee shell had destroyed his cookhouse. Around the time of the second battle of Manassas, a year later, McLean moved his family to Appomattox Court House and bought one of its two imposing residences, a two-story red-brick dwelling. When Colonel Marshall inquired about a place where Grant and Lee could meet, McLean took him to a de-



Top: A replica of the table on which Grant wrote the terms of surrender. Above: Clover Hill Tavern; to the right is the historian Ron Wilson; the other two men are wearing Civil War outfits.



crepit home that had no furniture. Marshall told him it wouldn't do. "Maybe my house will do," McLean said. So it came about that the man whose property was damaged in the earliest battle of the Civil War was the host for the talk that would end it.

Lee arrived first, wearing full-dress uniform, with a sash and a presentation sword. Grant, who had outraced his own baggage wagon in his rush to seal off Lee's army, was in his customary private's blouse, with muddy trousers tucked into muddy boots. Seated in McLean's parlor, the two men chatted amiably for a while about their army days in the Mexican War, when Lee had been a colonel and Grant a captain. Finally Lee brought up "the object of our present meeting" and asked Grant to write out the terms "under which you would receive the surrender of my army." Grant took out a pencil, wrote rapidly at a small wooden table, and handed the paper to Lee. It said:

...I propose to receive the surrender of the Army of Northern Virginia on the following terms, to wit: Rolls of all the officers and men to be made in duplicate, one copy to be given to an officer designated by me, the other to be retained by such officer or officers as you may designate. The officers to give their individual paroles not to take up arms against the Government of the United States until properly exchanged, and each company or regimental commander sign a like parole for the men of their commands. The arms, artillery and public property to be parked and stacked, and turned over to the officers appointed by me to receive them. This will not embrace the side-arms of the officers, nor their private horses or baggage. This done, each officer and man will be allowed to return to his home, not to be disturbed by United States authority so long as they observe their paroles and the laws in force wherever they may reside.

Very respectfully,
U. S. Grant,
Lieutenant-General

"This will have a very happy effect on my army," Lee said after reading the terms, which, far from hounding the Southerners with reprisals, simply let them all go home. Grant asked Lee if



Wilmer McLean's family on the porch of their house, where the peace was signed, April 9, 1865.

he had anything to add. Lee mentioned that his officers weren't the only horse owners in his army; the soldiers in his cavalry and artillery also owned their horses. Could those horses be kept? Grant agreed. He said he assumed that most of the men were small farmers and because "the country has been so raided by the two armies" he doubted that they could put in a crop to get through the next winter if they didn't take their horses home. (The soldiers hadn't been paid in more than a year.) "This will have the best possible effect upon my men," Lee said. "It will do much toward conciliating our people."

In parting, Lee told Grant that he would be returning some Union prisoners because he didn't have any provisions for them—or, in fact, for his own men. Grant said he would send 25,000 rations to Lee's army. Lee then rode back through the lines—both armies were camped within sight of each other—and when word of the surrender reached Union headquarters it touched off a spree of cannon firing.

Grant put an end to it. "The war is over," he told his staff. "The rebels are our countrymen again, and the best sign of rejoicing after the victory will be to abstain from all demonstrations in the field." Victory had left him feeling "sad and depressed." He couldn't exult, he said, in "the downfall of a foe who had fought so long and valiantly." Catching the clemency of the moment, the Union soldiers decided not to wait for the official delivery of food to the defeated enemy. They went over to the Confederate camps and emptied their haversacks of beef, bacon, sugar, and other delicacies the rebels had long gone without.

Grant ordered printing presses brought to the Clover Hill Tavern, and 28,231 parole passes for the Southern soldiers were printed by April 12. On that morning, four years to the day after the attack on Fort Sumter that started the war, the Confederate troops marched into the village and stacked their arms. Here the final act of healing that runs (*Continued on page 94*)

The Colonial Cities of Mexico

STEP INTO THE PAGES OF HISTORY

Call now for your FREE
"Step-by-Step" Guide.
Eighteen tours that explore
the early history of the
Americas. From Morelia
to Zacatecas, there are
over 50 Colonial Cities
in all. So make some
history of your own.
Take a Colonial City
adventure!
Where It All Began.
Where It All Begins.



For a FREE guide, call 1-800-TO BEGIN!

Mail to: Florida Tourism, Dept. TH93, 126 West Van Buren Street, Tallahassee, Florida 32399-2000. Or call 904-487-1462. Allow 3-5 weeks delivery.

SEE FLORIDA

Coast to coast to coast

Name _____	Street _____
City _____	State _____ Zip _____

Just what you'd expect in Florida. Great service.

Any way you look at it, you'll love it. Florida.

Send for our free, full-color Vacation Guide today.

APPOMATTOX

(Continued from page 93)

through the whole Appomattox story took place, set in motion by the man who, after Grant and Lee, was perhaps the most remarkable of the mighty captains assembled in the village that day. Joshua L. Chamberlain, the Union general designated to receive the surrender, had been a Bowdoin College professor. Requesting a leave of absence to study in Europe, he instead joined the army, won a battlefield commission for repeated feats of bravery and leadership, and was wounded six times, once so severely that his death was expected by the army doctor who attended him. After the war he became a four-term governor of Maine and a 12-year president of Bowdoin.

Now, with his soldiers standing at attention, General Chamberlain watched the first of the ragged Southern regiments coming up the road—the remnants of the Stonewall Jackson Brigade, led by General John B. Gordon. "The momentous meaning of this occasion impressed me deeply," Chamberlain later wrote in his eloquent book *The Passing of the Armies*. "I resolved to mark it by some token of recognition, which could be no other than a salute of arms. [I was] well aware of the criticisms that would follow.... My main reason, however, was one for which I sought no authority nor asked forgiveness. Before us in proud humiliation stood the embodiment of manhood: men whom neither toils and sufferings, nor the fact of death, nor disaster, nor hopelessness could bend from their resolve; standing there before us now, thin, worn and famished, but erect, and with eyes looking level into ours, waking memories that bound us together as no other bond;—was not such manhood to be welcomed back into a Union so tested and assured?"

Responding to his command, "instantly our whole line from right to left, regiment by regiment in succession, gives the soldier's salutation, from the 'order arms' to the old 'carry'—the marching salute. Gordon, at the head of the column, riding with heavy spirit and downcast face, catches the sound of shifting arms, (Continued on page 112)

Hop Around Australia Like the Natives!



EASTWEST'S SUN PASS* \$599

Hop around to Australia's most popular sun spots with Eastwest's Sun Pass - affordably priced at only \$599. And for as little as \$595 more, add a 7-day/6-night land package to Ayers Rock, Alice Springs and Cairns that includes hotel, sightseeing, transfers and a day trip to the famous Great Barrier Reef.

For reservations, contact your travel agent or Eastwest at 1-800-354-7471.



* Conditions apply. Package based on per person/double occupancy. Subject to change without notice.

APPOMATTOX

(Continued from page 94)

looks up, and, taking the meaning, wheels superbly, making with himself and his horse one uplifted figure, with profound salutation as he drops the point of his sword to the stirrup; then facing his own command, gives word for his successive brigades to pass us with the same position of the manual—honor answering honor. On our part not a sound of trumpet more, nor roll of drum; not a cheer, nor word nor whisper of vain-glorying, but an awed stillness rather, and breath-holding, as if it were the passing of the dead!"

From early morning until early afternoon the saluting Southern soldiers marched past the saluting Union soldiers, stacked their rifles and their tattered Confederate flags, and started for home. Home was anywhere from a hundred to a thousand miles away. Counting the Union troops, almost 100,000 men had been in Appomattox Court House. Seventy-two hours later they were all gone again.

"EVEN BEFORE THE SURRENDER, THIS village had been bypassed by the railroad," said Ron Wilson, historian of Appomattox Court House, which is now a National Park Service site, "and after the surrender it went right back into its cocoon. Civil War veterans never came back here for a reunion or put up any kind of commemorative marker."

We were sitting on the porch of the Clover Hill Tavern, looking across a vista of overwhelming stillness. Off to the east, the old Richmond-Lynchburg stage road—the road that the surrendering rebels took into the village—climbed across a countryside so recognizable to me from 19th-century landscape paintings that I almost expected to see the rebels coming down the road again. No newfangled sights or sounds disturbed the air—no plane flying overhead, no far-off whine of power tools. The word "stillness" was in my mind because of Bruce Catton's book *A Stillness at Appomattox*, whose title perfectly evoked the sudden silence that the two clashing armies found there, and Catton may have taken it from the "awed stillness" that Joshua Chamberlain said he felt as he watched the conquered soldiers troop into town.

In any case, "stillness" is no less the perfect word today. The town's vital signs, already faint, flickered out in 1892, when the courthouse burned down and the county seat was moved to the nearby railroad town of Appomattox. A year later the McLean house, which the luckless Wilmer McLean had long since lost to foreclosure, its parlor furniture and bric-a-brac having been carried off by souvenir hunters after Grant and Lee left, was dismantled by a subsequent owner, who intended to have it moved to Washington, D.C., as a historical exhibit. The project ran out of money, however, and McLean's house survived only as a pile of rotting boards and bricks. Thus stripped of the only building that performed a civic function and the only house that had national importance, the village fell into decay.

Congress saved it from oblivion in the mid-1930s by making it a historic site, but the actual rescue was delayed by World War II, and not until the war was over could the park service get on

INTRODUCING The Newest Exploration Cruise Ship

M.V. COLUMBUS CARAVELLE

Newly built in Finland in 1990



Explore the Unspoiled!

Airfare included from over 100 U.S. cities.

7 Antarctic Voyages
Nov. 1992 - Feb. 1993

4 Western Amazon Voyages
March - April 1993

- Bahamas Flag
- 7560 Tons, Fully Stabilized, Ice Class rated 1A
- 17,000 Square Feet of Public Areas, Crew of 120
- Passengers - 250 (Lower Beds)
- Scientists and Lecturers on board all cruises
- Continental Cuisine with Italian and local specialties

Singles Accommodated At No Supplement

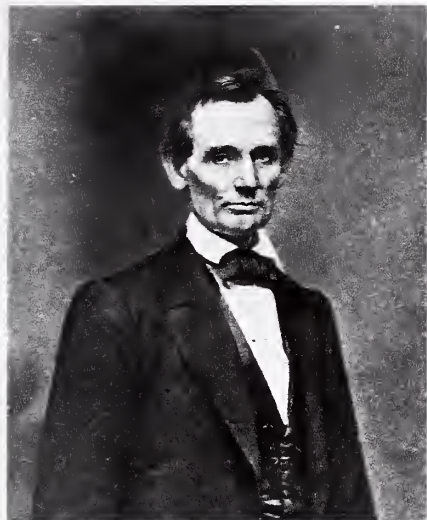
SEA AIR
HOLIDAYS, LTD.

733 Summer Street
Stamford, CT 06901
Telephone: 800-732-6247

CALL
FOR OUR EXCITING
BROCHURE!



with the work of putting the village back together. The McLean house was reconstructed from old photographs and records. So was the courthouse, whose interior now serves as the visitors' center, thereby hiding what would have been an intrusive tourist facility. About 20 other long-neglected struc-



Culver Pictures

Abraham Lincoln, also by Mathew Brady.

tures were repaired and restored: the tavern and its guest house and kitchen, the county jail, Meeks' Store, the Woodson Law Office, four private homes, and various small kitchens, servants' quarters, smokehouses, and stables. Together, along with stately old trees and tidy yards and picket fences and split-rail fences, they make a village that's as pretty as a picture—almost too pretty; no town ever looked this spruce. Ordinarily I can take just so much ex post facto quaintness, and an entirely fake town like Colonial Williamsburg, peddling colonial authenticity, makes me little short of hostile. But at Appomattox Court House I felt contented and grateful. Though the village has been heavily patched and painted, it has the integrity of all those historic American places, like Harpers Ferry, where period buildings have been faithfully salvaged from near-ruin and the original look of the streets is still intact.

"When visitors come here they expect to find a courthouse and nothing else," Ron Wilson told me. "They want to see where all those men who struggled for so long brought things to a con- (Continued on page 114)

YOUR BEST VACATION VALUE!

Set sail for great savings on The Most Popular Cruise Line in the World! Indulge yourself on a fabulous Carnival vacation. No resort offers more for one low everything's-included-before-you-go price. It's your best vacation value!

SAVE \$1,100 PER CABIN
7 DAY CRUISES FROM
\$599 PER PERSON
(Cruise Only)

3 DAY CRUISES
FROM
\$259 PER PERSON
(Cruise Only)

CALL THE CRUISE LINE, INC.

America's Foremost Cruise Center

1-800-777-0707 (U.S. & Canada)



Free Magazine

the
"Fun Ships"

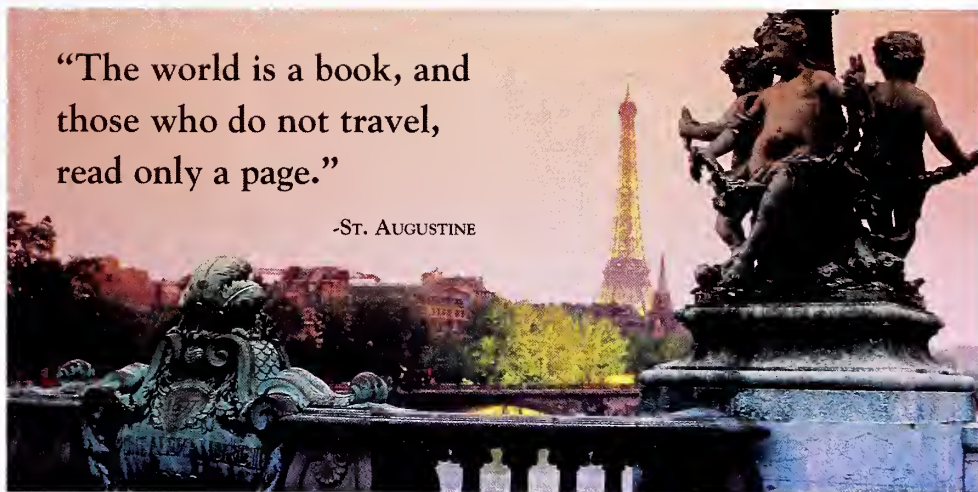
Carnival

THE MOST POPULAR CRUISE LINE IN THE WORLD!™
Registered in Liberia and The Bahamas

Open 7 Days

"The world is a book, and
those who do not travel,
read only a page."

-ST. AUGUSTINE



If you've spent the past several years talking and dreaming about a trip to Europe, make 1993 the year you actually go.

EF EuroTours offers 30 European travel programs, ranging from guided educational tours with adults like yourself to one week leisurely stays in great cities such as London, Paris and

Rome. All at prices you won't believe.

Starting as low as \$850, our programs include airfare, hotels and more!

So if you have a desire to travel and learn, we have the vacations that can make your wishes come true. Call or write for your free copy of our 1993 brochure.



EF EuroTours
Vacations For People
Who Travel To Learn

1-800-242-4686

Reserve by December 1, 1992, and enjoy two extra nights in Europe free!

A Division of EF Institute
For Cultural Exchange

Yes! Send me your free brochure.

NAME

ADDRESS

CITY

STATE ZIP

TELEPHONE

Return to:
EF EuroTours
One Memorial Drive
Cambridge, MA 02142

APPOMATTOX

(Continued from page 113)

clusion. But then they find that they're in a village, walking on old roads, smelling country smells, looking at cows in the fields, slowing down to a different pace. We've gotten them out of the automobile and back to an earlier time. We try to bring about a contemplative feeling: to get people to reflect on where this nation has been and what it has come from, to realize that after the Civil War it could never have gone back to the way it was before. It had been pushed forward."

Summing up this "second American revolution" in the epilogue of *Battle Cry of Freedom*, James McPherson writes: "The old federal republic in which the national government had rarely touched the average citizen except through the post office gave way to a more centralized polity that taxed the people directly and created an internal revenue bureau to collect these taxes, drafted men into the army, expanded the jurisdiction of federal courts, created a national currency and a national banking system, and established the first national agency for social welfare—the Freedman's Bureau. Eleven of the first twelve amendments to the Constitution had limited the powers of the national government; six of the next seven, beginning with the Thirteenth Amendment in 1865, vastly expanded those powers at the expense of the states." One major result of these changes was a shift of political power from the South to the North. Before the Civil War the majority of presidents, Supreme Court justices, and Speakers of the House came from slave-holding states. After the war that imbalance was reversed, and half a century would pass before a Southerner became president again.

"Most people come to Appomattox Court House because they really want to—it's totally off the usual path," said Jon B. Montgomery, superintendent of the site, which gets roughly 110,000 tourists a year. "They're looking for inspiration. The story we try to tell is not the final battle. It's the reconciliation of the country and the generous terms offered by Grant. He didn't try to

play the conquering hero. We want people to get a sense of the sacredness of the area."

The question that tourists most frequently ask, however, is of a lowlier order: Is the furniture in the McLean house original? "We don't want them to get off on a tangent about furniture and forget what happened here," Montgomery said. "We try to keep this place just the way it was. There's nothing commercial about it—you won't find any wax museums. At most Civil War sites you're so surrounded by the twentieth century that you can't block it out; when you go to Gettysburg it's hard to find the battlefield. But this is still just a quiet village." The absence of hucksterism had even struck me out on the highway that runs through the modern town of Appomattox, a strip consisting of such tourist amenities as a Burger King, a McDonald's, and a Super 8 Motel. I saw no exploitation of the fact that a major historic site was just three miles down the road. Nobody had opened a Robert E. Lee Laundromat.

But through the stillness of the area one theme kept booming in my ears: forgiveness and rebirth. "Grant and Lee had to look far into the future," Ron Wilson said. "They knew that the energies that had been given to divisions for so many years would have to be devoted to rebuilding the country. Their meeting wasn't one of those peace conferences that plant the seeds of another war. There was no vindictiveness. The terms that Grant offered at Appomattox set the tone for the other three surrenders by Confederate units. They accepted exactly the same terms that Grant offered Lee."

Again, as with the courthouse that the two generals didn't meet in, I saw that I had brought along a second misconception: that the Civil War ended at Appomattox. In fact, it was not until April 26 that Johnston surrendered to Sherman, near Durham, North Carolina, and not until late May and early June that the last of the rebel units surrendered in ceremonies at New Orleans and Galveston. "After Appomattox," Joe Williams, a park ranger, reminded me, "there were still two hundred thousand Confederate troops fighting, and they wouldn't have laid

down their arms if Grant had taken a hard line with Lee. The potential for long-term bitterness was there. Grant's terms gave the rest of the Southern soldiers a good reason to go home."

Unfortunately, that largeness of spirit—the brotherhood that the soldiers of both sides had long since come to feel for one another—didn't extend to civilian conduct. "If the soldiers could have handled the Reconstruction it would have been much less abusive of the South," Jon Montgomery said. "And of course it would also have made a difference if Lincoln had lived. Instead the politicians prolonged the agony."

But at Appomattox Court House such pettiness was still ahead—no part of its brief chronicle. The village, I felt, existed in a cul-de-sac of history, above politics and almost outside time, as if it had been brought to life for just one event. Only three people were strongly alive to me there. Two of them, Lee and Grant, continued to radiate powerful qualities that Americans still value and honor: one symbolizing nobility and the aristocratic tradition of the old South, the other symbolizing the self-made common man of the new North, Midwest, and West.

The third person was the inescapable Lincoln. The man would never get out of my life. Appomattox was, finally, his show. I could almost see him standing over the little table in the parlor of the McLean house, where Grant sat scribbling the surrender terms. I knew that Lincoln had often spoken of wanting a merciful peace, but I didn't know whether he and Grant had found time to discuss it, and I asked Ron Wilson about it. He said they had met on March 27 and 28 at City Point—on the *River Queen*, in the James River—and had talked at length about the rapidly approaching end of the war and the civil disarray it was bound to bring.

"You just know," Wilson told me, "that Lincoln said, 'Let 'em down easy.'" •

For further information, call the visitors' center, at 804-352-8987. The center, located in the restored courthouse, offers maps, brochures, slide shows, and orientation sessions. For more on Richmond, Virginia, turn to The Globetrotter's Indispensable Index, page 36.

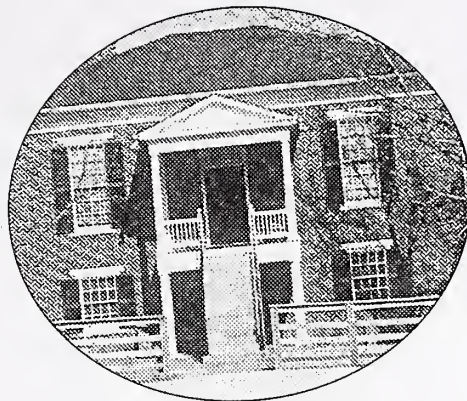
Custer's Union cavalry and Gen. Fitzhugh Lee's Confederate cavalry, protecting the Army of Northern Virginia's flank, took place on April 3. While the narration was animated, with letters from the combatants punctuating the description, little attempt was made to relate what visitors see today to what happened back then.

After zigzagging pleasantly through Amelia County and buying soft drinks in Mannboro at Sydnor's, a general store and post office, we arrived at the town of Amelia Court House. On April 4 and 5, Lee's troops from Richmond and Petersburg assembled here to head south along the Richmond & Danville railroad tracks and join forces in North Carolina with Gen. Joseph E. Johnston's Army of Tennessee. Desperate for food, Lee expected boxcars of rations but instead found only ammunition.

The Lee's Retreat sign at Amelia Court House is in an obscure spot, and the pulloff was occupied during our visit by a large gravel pile and a giant bright orange generator. The route also skirted the white-columned 1924 brick courthouse. We detoured back and walked out on the courthouse lawn, which like most in the region has a memorial to Confederate soldiers, this one reading: "O comrades, wheresoe'er ye rest apart, Amelia shrines you here within her heart." A small mortar that was used at the crater in Petersburg is mounted on a stone. Its inscription says a similar one blew up during a salute when the remains of Jefferson Davis, the President of the Confederacy, were brought through town after his death in 1889.

The next three stops, Jetersville, Amelia Springs and Deatonville, where skirmishes with Union forces prevented Lee from heading south according to plan, today offer unimpressive vistas — a mobile home park, a recently harvested pine forest and a country store parking lot. But stop No. 7, beside a tin-roofed general store, provides a good view of farmland. This is Holt's Corner, a crossroads where Lee's troops split up and headed in two directions. Stop No. 8, the Hillsman House, built in the 1770's, was one of the focal points of the fierce fighting of Little Saylor's Creek (today spelled Sailor's Creek). Behind the house, used as a Union hospital during the battle, the grassy hillside, with its commanding view of the creek bottom, is an ideal spot for a picnic and for contemplating the mayhem that occurred here on April 6, 1865.

In the confusion of their flight, the Confederate troops with hundreds of supply wagons bogged down in the swollen creek several miles downstream from the Hillsman House. Three bloody confrontations resulted in calamity for the retreating Confederates. Outnumbered and outgunned, the troops of General Ewell, which dug in on the hillside across the creek from the Hillsman House, repelled the Union attackers in hand-to-hand fighting once but were eventually forced to surrender. Downstream, Union infantry under Gen. Andrew Humphreys engaged Gen. John D. Gordon's troops, most of whom also capitulated. In all, nearly a



Reconstruction of the Appomattox Courthouse.

eight generals, were taken prisoner.

That night Union troops ransacked the captured supply wagons, feasting on boiled ham, bacon, pickles and hardtack and drinking potent applejack. In the officer's wagons they found dress swords, official papers, a trunk full of Confederate cash and even a litter of puppies.

Stops Nos. 9 to 12 provide views in and around the Sailor's Creek battlefield. At stop No. 10, the Lockett House, a wooden structure built in 1858, the chimney is still riddled with bullet holes. After the battle, Piney Grove, as the house was known, functioned as a Federal hospital and the field across the road as a temporary cemetery.

Stop No. 13 is a highway pulloff marking the battle at High Bridge, at the time a magnificent structure of 21 brick piers, up to 126 feet tall, supporting the Southside Railroad over the Appomattox River. Although some of the piers still exist, none are visible from this section of the road. Here, on April 6, the rebel cavalry fended off a 900-troop Union raiding party dispatched to destroy the bridge and took many prisoners, including a Yankee brass band.

A GOOD lunch stop, for those not picnicking, is Farmville, a quaint college town. Tasty burgers are served at Walker's Diner, where the rail tracks are so close by that when a Norfolk Southern roars by you need to grab your plate.

Arriving in Farmville on the morning of April 7, Lee's hungry army was chiefly concerned with reprovisioning. This time the boxcars full of rations were there, but before they could all be unloaded, the Union cavalry arrived. By early afternoon, the Federals controlled the town, and Grant decided to send a message to Lee asking for his surrender. That evening at a bonfire-illuminated military review in front of his hotel, Grant's troops, sensing the impending victory, waved banners, cheered and sang "John Brown's Body."

Like Lee, the tour crosses to the north side of the sleepy, tree-shrouded Appomattox River. Just outside Farmville, the broadcast at stop No. 15 related that Lee's men hastily dug earthworks with their hands and bay-

Union troops pressed their hot pursuit. Although there have been additions to the white church and it has been preserved with aluminum siding, it is still a picture of country stateliness. Inside, the walls and ceiling are made of a striking tongue-and-groove wood paneling.

Stop No. 16 is at High Bridge again, the same one that Confederate troops prevented Union troops from burning earlier. This time, on the north side of the Appomattox River, it was Lee's troops who tried to burn the bridge to hinder the pursuing Federals, but they failed to destroy the lower wagon bridge. If you have two days for the tour, this is a good place to watch the sunset. Two barns sit in fields that take on a dreamy look in the light of the pink sky. The distant black span is a section of the bridge.

The next stop is so close to Appomattox Courthouse National Historical Park that the tour broadcast is on 1600 A.M. rather than 1610 so as not to interfere with the park's own broadcast. A blip midway in the narrative repeatedly sent it back to the start, so we popped in a tour cassette tape that we had fortunately bought at the Petersburg visitors center. At this site, on the day before Lee's surrender, Gen. James Longstreet's troops entrenched to protect Lee's army, now gathered four miles away at Appomattox Courthouse. At last, Lee wrote to Grant asking about the terms of surrender he was offering.

Between stops 17 and 18 is the Appomattox Courthouse National Historical Park. You can either proceed to the next stop and double back, or stop now as we did. Be forewarned that from spring to fall the intense south Virginia sun can be enervating. I prefer to arrive in the morning. There is plenty to see — an old tavern, law offices and houses restored to 1865 condition — and the wide, sandy paths are pleasant for meandering. The 1848 McLean House, where Lee and Grant came to terms on April 9, 1865, was dismantled in 1893 in a failed plan to transplant it to Washington as a war museum. It was later rebuilt and furnished as it might have been.

At stop No. 18, now a 20th-century train station, the Battle of Appomattox Station took place on the night of April 8, and Union troops captured rebel artillery as well as four trains of supplies meant for Lee's beleaguered troops. Even though there are two more official stops, the narrative here informs you that you have reached the end of the tour.

Those final two stops require backtracking some 30 or 40 minutes. However, for those who have time, it is worth a visit to No. 20, the 1839 Nottoway Courthouse, where Federal troops destroyed county records and Grant lodged in the tiny village on April 5.

The shaded lawn and antebellum brick buildings with white columns remind you that although more than a century passed, in some places not so much changed. Having grown up in Richmond, Confederate capital, and attended a school where the student body was divided "Lees" and "Jacksons" for literary and athletic contests, I can appreciate that.

